MEXICAN AFFAIRS

ADDRESS

OF THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

DELIVERED AT A JOINT SESSION OF THE TWO HOUSES OF CONGRESS

AUGUST 27, 1913

WASHINGTON
1913

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ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE CONGRESS:

It is clearly my duty to lay before you, very fully and without reservation, the facts concerning our present relations with the Republic of Mexico. The deplorable posture of affairs in Mexico I need not describe, but I deem it my duty to speak very frankly of what this Government has done and should seek to do in fulfillment of its obligation to Mexico herself, as a friend and neighbor, and to American citizens whose lives and vital interests are daily affected by the distressing conditions which now obtain beyond our southern border.

Those conditions touch us very nearly. Not merely because they lie at our very doors. That of course makes us more vividly and more constantly conscious of them, and every instinct of neighborly interest and sympathy is aroused and quickened by them; but that is only one element in the determination of our duty. We are glad to call ourselves the friends of Mexico, and we shall, I hope, have many an occasion, in happier times as well as in these days of trouble and confusion, to show that our friendship is genuine and disinterested, capable of sacrifice and every generous manifestation. The peace, prosperity, and contentment of Mexico mean more, much more, to us than merely an enlarged field for our commerce and enterprise. They mean an enlargement of the field of self-government and the realization of the hopes and rights of a nation with whose best aspirations, so long suppressed and disappointed, we deeply sympathize. We shall yet prove to the Mexican people that we know how to serve them without first thinking how we shall serve ourselves.

But we are not the only friends of Mexico. The whole world desires her peace and progress; and the whole world is interested as never before. Mexico lies at last where all the world looks on. Central America is about to be touched by the great routes of the world's trade and intercourse running free from ocean to ocean at the Isthmus. The future has much in store for Mexico,

as for all the States of Central America; but the best gifts can come to her only if she be ready and free to receive them and to enjoy them honorably. America in particular—America north and south and upon both continents—waits upon the development of Mexico; and that development can be sound and lasting only if it be the product of a genuine freedom, a just and ordered government founded upon law. Only so can it be peaceful or fruitful of the benefits of peace. Mexico has a great and enviable future before her, if only she choose and attain the paths of honest constitutional government.

The present circumstances of the Republic, I deeply regret to say, do not seem to promise even the foundations of such a peace. We have waited many months, months full of peril and anxiety, for the conditions there to improve, and they have not improved. They have grown worse, rather. The territory in some sort controlled by the provisional authorities at Mexico City has grown smaller, not larger. The prospect of the pacification of the country, even by arms, has seemed to grow more and more remote; and its pacification by the authorities at the capital is evidently impossible by any other means than force. Difficulties more and more entangle those who claim to constitute the legitimate government of the Republic. They have not made good their claim in fact. Their successes in the field have proved only temporary. War and disorder, devastation and confusion, seem to threaten to become the settled fortune of the distracted country. As friends we could wait no longer for a solution which every week seemed further away. It was our duty at least to volunteer our good offices—to offer to assist, if we might, in effecting some arrangement which would bring relief and peace and set up a universally acknowledged political authority there.

Accordingly, I took the liberty of sending the Hon. John Lind, formerly governor of Minnesota, as my personal spokesman and representative, to the City of Mexico, with *the following instructions:*

Press very earnestly upon the attention of those who are now exercising authority or wielding influence in Mexico the following considerations and advice:

The Government of the United States does not feel at liberty any longer to stand inactively by while it becomes daily more and more evident that no real progress is being made towards the establishment of a government at the City of Mexico which the country will obey and respect.

The Government of the United States does not stand in the same case with the other great Governments of the world in respect of what is happening or what is likely to happen in Mexico. We offer our good offices, not only because of our genuine desire to play the part of a friend, but also because we are expected by the powers of the world to act as Mexico's nearest friend.

We wish to act in these circumstances in the spirit of the most earnest and disinterested friendship. It is our purpose in whatever we do or propose in this perplexing and distressing situation not only to pay the most scrupulous

regard to the sovereignty and independence of Mexico—that we take as a matter of course to which we are bound by every obligation of right and honor—but also to give every possible evidence that we act in the interest of Mexico alone, and not in the interest of any person or body of persons who may have personal or property claims in Mexico which they may feel that they have the right to press. We are seeking to counsel Mexico for her own good and in the interest of her own peace, and not for any other purpose whatever. The Government of the United States would deem itself discredited if it had any selfish or ulterior purpose in transactions where the peace, happiness, and prosperity of a whole people are involved. It is acting as its friendship for Mexico, not as any selfish interest, dictates.

The present situation in Mexico is incompatible with the fulfillment of international obligations on the part of Mexico, with the civilized development of Mexico herself, and with the maintenance of tolerable political and economic conditions in Central America. It is upon no common occasion, therefore, that the United States offers her counsel and assistance. All America cries out for a settlement.

A satisfactory settlement seems to us to be conditioned on—

(*a*) An immediate cessation of fighting throughout Mexico, a definite armistice solemnly entered into and scrupulously observed;

(*b*) Security given for an early and free election in which all will agree to take part;

(*c*) The consent of Gen. Huerta to bind himself not to be a candidate for election as President of the Republic at this election; and

(*d*) The agreement of all parties to abide by the results of the election and cooperate in the most loyal way in organizing and supporting the new administration.

The Government of the United States will be glad to play any part in this settlement or in its carrying out which it can play honorably and consistently with international right. It pledges itself to recognize and in every way possible and proper to assist the administration chosen and set up in Mexico in the way and on the conditions suggested.

Taking all the existing conditions into consideration, the Government of the United States can conceive of no reasons sufficient to justify those who are now attempting to shape the policy or exercise the authority of Mexico in declining the offices of friendship thus offered. Can Mexico give the civilized world a satisfactory reason for rejecting our good offices? If Mexico can suggest any better way in which to show our friendship, serve the people of Mexico, and meet our international obligations, we are more than willing to consider the suggestion.

Mr. Lind executed his delicate and difficult mission with singular tact, firmness, and good judgment, and made clear to the authorities at the City of Mexico not only the purpose of his visit but also the spirit in which it had been undertaken. But the proposals he submitted were rejected, in a note the full text of which I take the liberty of laying before you.

I am led to believe that they were rejected partly because the authorities at Mexico City had been grossly misinformed and misled upon two points. They did not realize the spirit of the American people in this matter, their earnest friendliness and yet sober determination that some just solution be found for the Mexican difficulties;

and they did not believe that the present administration spoke, through Mr. Lind, for the people of the United States. The effect of this unfortunate misunderstanding on their part is to leave them singularly isolated and without friends who can effectually aid them. So long as the misunderstanding continues we can only await the time of their awakening to a realization of the actual facts. We can not thrust our good offices upon them. The situation must be given a little more time to work itself out in the new circumstances; and I believe that only a little while will be necessary. For the circumstances are new. The rejection of our friendship makes them new and will inevitably bring its own alterations in the whole aspect of affairs. The actual situation of the authorities at Mexico City will presently be revealed.

Meanwhile, what is it our duty to do? Clearly, everything that we do must be rooted in patience and done with calm and disinterested deliberation. Impatience on our part would be childish, and would be fraught with every risk of wrong and folly. We can afford to exercise the self-restraint of a really great nation which realizes its own strength and scorns to misuse it. It was our duty to offer our active assistance. It is now our duty to show what true neutrality will do to enable the people of Mexico to set their affairs in order again and wait for a further opportunity to offer our friendly counsels. The door is not closed against the resumption, either upon the initiative of Mexico or upon our own, of the effort to bring order out of the confusion by friendly cooperative action, should fortunate occasion offer.

While we wait the contest of the rival forces will undoubtedly for a little while be sharper than ever, just because it will be plain that an end must be made of the existing situation, and that very promptly; and with the increased activity of the contending factions will come, it is to be feared, increased danger to the noncombatants in Mexico as well as to those actually in the field of battle. The position of outsiders is always particularly trying and full of hazard where there is civil strife and a whole country is upset. We should earnestly urge all Americans to leave Mexico at once, and should assist them to get away in every way possible—not because we would mean to slacken in the least our efforts to safeguard their lives and their interests, but because it is imperative that they should take no unnecessary risks when it is physically possible for them to leave the country. We should let every one who assumes to exercise authority in any part of Mexico know in the most unequivocal way that we shall vigilantly watch the fortunes of those Americans who can not get away, and shall hold those responsible for their sufferings and losses to a definite reckoning. That can be and will be made plain beyond the possibility of a misunderstanding.

For the rest, I deem it my duty to exercise the authority conferred upon me by the law of March 14, 1912, to see to it that neither side to the struggle now going on in Mexico receive any assistance from this side the border. I shall follow the best practice of nations in the matter of neutrality by forbidding the exportation of arms or munitions of war of any kind from the United States to any part of the Republic of Mexico—a policy suggested by several interesting precedents and certainly dictated by many manifest considerations of practical expediency. We can not in the circumstances be the partisans of either party to the contest that now distracts Mexico, or constitute ourselves the virtual umpire between them.

I am happy to say that several of the great Governments of the world have given this Government their generous moral support in urging upon the provisional authorities at the City of Mexico the acceptance of our proffered good offices in the spirit in which they were made. We have not acted in this matter under the ordinary principles of international obligation. All the world expects us in such circumstances to act as Mexico's nearest friend and intimate adviser. This is our immemorial relation towards her. There is nowhere any serious question that we have the moral right in the case or that we are acting in the interest of a fair settlement and of good government, not for the promotion of some selfish interest of our own. If further motive were necessary than our own good will towards a sister Republic and our own deep concern to see peace and order prevail in Central America, this consent of mankind to what we are attempting, this attitude of the great nations of the world towards what we may attempt in dealing with this distressed people at our doors, should make us feel the more solemnly bound to go to the utmost length of patience and forbearance in this painful and anxious business. The steady pressure of moral force will before many days break the barriers of pride and prejudice down, and we shall triumph as Mexico's friends sooner than we could triumph as her enemies—and how much more handsomely, with how much higher and finer satisfactions of conscience and of honor!

REPLY OF SENOR GAMBOA TO PROPOSALS OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT CONVEYED THROUGH HON. JOHN LIND.

MEXICO, *August 16, 1913.*

SIR: On the 6th instant, pursuant to telegraphic instructions from his Government, the chargé d'affaires ad interim of the United States of America verbally informed Mr. Manuel Garza Aldape, then in charge of the department of foreign affairs, of your expected arrival in this Republic with a mission of peace. As fortunately neither then nor to-day has there existed a state of war between the United States of America and the United Mexican States, my Government was very much surprised to learn that your mission near us should be referred to as one of peace. This brought forth the essential condition which my Government ventured to demand in its unnumbered note of the 6th instant addressed to the aforesaid chargé d'affaires—"that if you do not see fit to properly establish your official character" your sojourn could not be pleasing to us according to the meaning which diplomatic usage gives to this word.

Fortunately, from the first interview I had the pleasure to have with you, your character as confidential agent of your Government was fully established, inasmuch as the letter you had the kindness to show me, though impersonally addressed, was signed by the President of the United States, for whom we entertain the highest respect.

It is not essential at this time, Mr. Confidential Agent, that I should recall the whole of our first conversation. I will say, however, that I found you to be a well-informed man and animated by the sincerest wishes that the unfortunate tension of the present relations between your Government and mine should reach a prompt and satisfactory solution.

During our second interview, which, like the first one of the 14th instant, was held at my private ([1]), you saw fit, after all intent, honest and frank exchange of opinion concerning the attitudes of our respective Governments which did not lead us to any decision, to deliver to me the note containing the instructions, also signed by the President of the United States. Duly authorized by the President of the Republic, pursuant to the unanimous approval of the Cabinet, which was convened for the purpose, I have the honor to make a detailed reply to such instructions.

The Government of Mexico has paid due attention to the advice and considerations expressed by the Government of the United States; has done this on account of three principal reasons: First, because, as stated before, Mexico entertains the highest respect for the personality of His Excellency Woodrow Wilson; second, because certain European and American Governments, with which Mexico

[1] Omission.

cultivates the closest relations of international amity, having in a most delicate, respectful way, highly gratifying to us, made use of their good offices to the end that Mexico should accord you a hearing, inasmuch as you were the bearer of a private mission from the President of the United States; and, third, because Mexico was anxious, not so much to justify its attitude before the inhabitants of the Republic in the present emergency, the great majority of whom and by means of imposing and orderly manifestations, have signified their adhesion and approval, as to demonstrate in every way the justice of its cause.

The imputation contained in the first paragraph of your instructions that no progress has been made toward establishing in the capital of Mexico a Government that may enjoy the respect and obedience of the Mexican people is unfounded. In contradiction with their gross imputation, which is not supported by any proofs, principally because there are none, it affords me pleasure to refer, Mr. Confidential Agent, to the following facts which abound in evidence and which to a certain extent must be known to you by direct observation. The Mexican Republic, Mr. Confidential Agent, is formed by 27 States, 3 Territories, and 1 Federal District, in which the supreme power of the Republic has its seat. Of these 27 States, 18 of them, the 3 Territories, and the Federal District (making a total of 22 political entities) are under the absolute control of the present Government, which, aside from the above, exercises its authority over almost every port in the Republic and consequently over the customhouses therein established. Its southern frontier is open and at peace. Moreover, my Government has an army of 80,000 men in the field with no other purpose than to insure complete peace in the Republic, the only national aspiration and solemn promise of the present provisional President. The above is sufficient to exclude any doubt that my Government is worthy of the respect and obedience of the Mexican people, because the latter's consideration has been gained at the cost of the greatest sacrifice and in spite of the most evil influences.

My Government fails to understand what the Government of the United States of America means by saying that it does not find itself in the same case with reference to the other nations of the earth concerning what is happening and is likely to happen in Mexico. The conditions of Mexico at the present time are unfortunately neither doubtful nor secret; it is afflicted with an internal strife which has been raging almost three years, and which I can only classify in these lines as a fundamental mistake. With reference to what might happen in Mexico neither you, Mr. Confidential Agent, nor I nor anyone else can prognosticate, because no assertion is possible on incidents which have not occurred. On the other hand, my Government greatly appreciates the good offices tendered to it by the Government of the United States of America in the present circumstances; it recognizes that they are inspired by the noble desire to act as a friend as well as by the wishes of all the other Governments which expect the United States to act as Mexico's nearest friend. But if such good offices are to be of the character of those now tendered to us we should have to decline them in the most categorical and definite manner.

Inasmuch as the Government of the United States is willing to act in the most disinterested friendship, it will be difficult for it to find a more propitious opportunity than the following: If it should only watch that no material and monetary assistance is given to rebels who find refuge, conspire, and provide themselves with arms and food on the other side of the border; if it should demand from its minor and local authorities the strictest observance of the neutrality laws, I assure you, Mr. Confidential Agent, that the complete pacification of this Republic would be accomplished within a relatively short time.

I intentionally abstain from replying to the allusion that it is the purpose of the United States of America to show the greatest respect for the sovereignty and independence of Mexico, because, Mr. Confidential Agent, there are matters which not even from the standpoint of the idea itself could be given an answer in writing.

His Excellency, Mr. Wilson, is laboring under a serious delusion when he declares that the present situation of Mexico is incompatible with the compliance of her international obligations, with the development of its own civilization, and with the required maintenance of certain political and economical conditions tolerable in Central America. Strongly backing that there is a mistake, because to this date no charge has been made by any foreign Government accusing us of the above lack of compliance, we are punctually meeting all of our credits; we are still maintaining diplomatic missions cordially accepted in almost all the countries of the world, and we continue to be invited to all kinds of international congresses and conferences. With regard to our interior development, the following proof is sufficient, to wit, a contract has just been signed with Belgian capitalists which means to Mexico the construction of something like 5,000 kilometers of railway. In conclusion, we fail to see the evil results, which are prejudicial only to ourselves, felt in Central America by our present domestic war. In one thing I do agree with you, Mr. Confidential Agent, and it is that the whole of America is clamoring for a prompt solution of our disturbances, this being a very natural sentiment if it is borne in mind that a country which was prosperous only yesterday has been suddenly caused to suffer a great internal misfortune.

Consequently Mexico can not for one moment take into consideration the four conditions which His Excellency Mr. Wilson has been pleased to propose through your honorable and worthy channel. I must give you the reasons for it: An immediate suspension of the struggle in Mexico, a definite armistice "solemnly constructed and scrupulously observed" is not possible, as to do this it would be necessary that there should be some one capable of proposing it without causing a profound offense to civilization, to the many bandits who, under this or that pretext, are marauding toward the south and committing the most outrageous depredations; and I know of no country in the world, the United States included, which may have ever dared to enter into agreement or to propose an armistice to individuals who, perhaps on account of a physiological accident, can be found all over the world beyond the pale of the divine and human laws. Bandits, Mr. Confidential Agent, are not admitted to armistice; the first action against them is one of correction, and

when this, unfortunately, fails their lives must be severed for the sake of the biological and fundamental principle then the useful sprouts should grow and fructify.

With reference to the rebels who style themselves "Constitutionalists," one of the representatives of whom has been given an ear by Members of the United States Senate, what could there be more gratifying to us than if convinced of the precipice to which we are being dragged by the resentment of their defeat, in a moment of reaction they would depose their rancor and add their strength to ours, so that all together we would undertake the great and urgent task of national reconstruction? Unfortunately they do not avail themselves of the amnesty law enacted by the provisional government immediately after its inauguration, but on the contrary, well-known rebels holding elective positions in the capital of the Republic or profitable employments, left the country without molestation, notwithstanding the information which the Government had that they were going to foreign lands to work against its interests, many of whom have taken upon themselves the unfortunate task of exposing the mysteries and infirmities from which we are suffering, the same as any other human congregations.

Were we to agree with them to the armistice suggested, they would, ipso facto, recognize their belligerency, and this is something which can not be done for many reasons which can not escape the perspicacity of the Government of the United States of America, which to this day, and publicly, at least, has classed them as rebels just the same as we have. And it is an accepted doctrine that no armistice can be concerted with rebels.

The assurance asked of my Government that it should promptly convene to free elections is the most evident proof and the most unequivocal concession that the Government of the United States considers it legally and solidly constituted and that it is exercising, like all those of its class, acts of such importance as to indicate the perfect civil operation of a sovereign nation. Inasmuch as our laws already provide such assurance, there is no fear that the latter may not be observed during the coming elections, and while the present Government is of a provisional character it will cede its place to the definite Government which may be elected by the people.

The request that Gen. Victoriano Huerta should agree not to appear as a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic in the coming elections can not be taken into consideration, because, aside from its strange and unwarranted character, there is a risk that the same might be interpreted as a matter of personal dislike. This point can only be decided by Mexican public opinion when it may be expressed at the polls.

The pledge that all parties should agree beforehand to the results of the election and to cooperate in the most loyal manner to support and organize the new administration is something to be tacitly supposed and desired, and that the experience of what this internal strife means to us in loss of life and the destruction of property will cause all contending political factions to abide by the results; but it would be extemporaneous to make any assertion in this respect, even by the most experienced countries in civil matters, inasmuch as no one can forecast or foresee the errors and excesses which men are

likely to commit, especially under the influence of political passion. We hasten to signify our appreciation to the United States of America because they agree from to-day to recognize and aid the future which we, the Mexican people, may elect to rule our destinies. On the other hand, we greatly deplore the present tension in our relations with your country, a tension which has been produced without Mexico having afforded the slightest cause therefor. The legality of the government of Gen. Huerta can not be disputed. Article 85 of our political constitution provides:

If at the beginning of a constitutional term neither the President nor the Vice President elected present themselves, or if the election had not been held and the results thereof declared by the 1st of December, nevertheless, the President whose term has expired will cease in his functions, and the secretary for foreign affairs shall immediately take charge of the Executive power in the capacity of provisional President; and if there should be no secretary for foreign affairs, or if he should be incapacitated, the Presidency shall devolve on one of the other secretaries pursuant to the order provided by the law establishing their number. The same procedure shall be followed when, in the case of the absolute or temporary absence of the President the Vice President fails to appear, when on leave of absence from his post if he should be discharging his duties, and when in the course of his term the absolute absence of both functionaries should occur.

Now, then, the facts which occurred are the following: The resignation of Francisco I. Madero, constitutional President, and Jose Maria Pino Suarez, constitutional Vice President of the Republic. These resignations having been accepted, Pedro Lascurain, minister for foreign affairs, took charge by operation of law of the vacant executive power, appointing, as he had the power to do, Gen. Victoriano Huerta to the post of minister of the interior. As Mr. Lascurain soon afterwards resigned, and as his resignation was immediately accepted by Congress, Gen. Victoriano Huerta took charge of the executive power, also by operation of law, with the provisional character and under the constitutional promise already complied with to issue a call for special elections. As will be seen, the point of issue is exclusively one of constitutional law in which no foreign nation, no matter how powerful and respectable it may be, should mediate in the least.

Moreover, my Government considers that at the present time the recognition of the Government of Gen. Huerta by that of the United States of America is not concerned, inasmuch as facts which exist on their own account are not and can not be susceptible of recognition. The only thing which is being discussed is a suspension of relations as abnormal and without reason; abnormal, because the ambassador of the United States of America, in his high diplomatic investiture and appearing as dean of the foreign diplomatic corps accredited to the Government of the Republic, congratulated Gen. Huerta upon his elevation to the Presidency, continued to correspond with this department by means of diplomatic notes, and on his departure left the first secretary of the embassy of the United States of America as chargé d'affaires ad interim, and the latter continues here in the free exercise of his functions; and without reason, because, I repeat, we have not given the slightest pretext.

The confidential agent may believe that solely because of the sincere esteem in which the people and the Government of the United States of America are held by the people and Government of

Mexico, and because of the consideration which it has for all friendly nations (and especially in this case for those which have offered their good offices), my Government consented to take into consideration, and to answer as briefly as the matter permits, the representations of which you are the bearer. Otherwise, it would have rejected them immediately because of their humiliating and unusual character, hardly admissible even in a treaty of peace after a victory, inasmuch as in a like case any nation which in the least respects itself would do likewise. It is because my Government has confidence in that when the justice of its cause is reconsidered with serenity and from a lofty point of view by the present President of the United States of America, whose sense of morality and uprightness are beyond question, that he will withdraw from his attitude and will contribute to the renewal of still firmer bases for the relations of sincere friendship and good understanding forcibly imposed upon us throughout the centuries by our geographical nearness, something which neither of us can change, even though we would so desire, by our mutual interests and by our share of activity in the common sense of prosperity, welfare, and culture, in regard to which we are pleased to acknowledge that you are enviably ahead of us.

With reference to the final part of the instructions of President Wilson, which I beg to include herewith and which say, "If Mexico can suggest any better way in which to show our friendship, serve the people of Mexico, and meet our international obligations, we are more than willing to consider the suggestion," that final part causes me to propose the following equally decorous arrangement: One, that our ambassador be received in Washington; two, that the United States of America send us a new ambassador without previous conditions.

And all this threatening and distressing situation will have reached a happy conclusion; mention will not be made of the causes which might carry us, if the tension persists, to no one knows what incalculable extremities for two peoples who have the unavoidable obligation to continue being friends, provided, of course, that this friendship is based upon mutual respect, which is indispensable between two sovereign entities wholly equal before law and justice.

In conclusion, permit me, Mr. Confidential Agent, to reiterate to you the assurances of my perfect consideration.

F. Gamboa,
Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic.

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